

Timely Topics Series No. 9



The Facts and Fallacies of Modern Spiritism

BY

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Published by Central Bureau of the Central Society
201 Temple Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

1920

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St. Louis, March 20 1920.

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The Facts and Fallacies of Modern Spiritism.

Is Sir A. Conan Doyle in Communication with the Spirits
of the Dead?

By J. Godfrey Raupert, K.S.G.

The following treatise on Spiritism is from the pen of Sir J. Godfrey Raupert, K.S.G., of England, now so-journing in this country. The author is an acknowledged authority on this subject, having conducted researches in this particular field for a number of years; his authority is readily evidenced by his books, some of which are: "Modern Spiritism," "The Dangers of Spiritualism," "Spiritistic Phenomena and their Interpretation." Mr. Raupert's work as a writer and lecturer has received the recognition of Rome. "With the sanction of the Holy See, says the *British Catholic Who's Who* (1918), "Mr. Raupert has given courses of lectures on the modern psychical and occult movement of thought at Seminaries and Catholic institutions in various parts of the world." And only a little more than a year ago the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, conveyed the blessing and encouragement of the Holy Father to the author in a letter dated Oct. 31, 1918.

In this letter—which emphasizes the timely character of an educational campaign regarding the danger of Spiritism—the Papal Secretary says: ". . . . Indeed, among the evils which at the present time are causing havoc to humanity, we may number those occult practices of Spiritism, which, if permitted to spread unchecked, threaten to inflict on countless persons the loss of body and soul.

"Therefore His Holiness can but esteem worthy of praise and of real benefit to humanity the work that is accomplished either by word or by writing, in order to save men from the meshes of such intricate and perilous practice His Holiness encourages your wholehearted zeal. . . ."

The treatise is particularly timely, since after practically every war a sort of religious revival takes place, the faithful seeking consolation and shelter in their faith, while those who have not true faith turn to various forms of superstition. This contention is being borne out by the prominence given to "communion with the dead" by such men as Sir A. Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge. It was in view of the emphasis laid on Spiritism at this after-war moment that the Central Bureau of the Central Society requested Mr. Raupert to prepare these articles.

The Publishers.

I.

I know of nothing in our modern literature which so forcibly and clearly reflects and illustrates the Zeitgeist as the recent statements and articles by Sir A. Conan Doyle.

The age in which we live is, as all thinking men know, increasingly departing from belief in the Supernatural as revealed in the Gospels and the traditions of Historical Christianity, and is relapsing into paganism, even though this paganism hides itself behind attractive and "scientific" and even academic terms. But the human heart cannot altogether exist without some contact with that unseen world which it knows to exist and with which it feels itself to be related. As a consequence a very distinct blank is created which causes the distressed mind to cast about for some kind of substitute which is calculated to fill this blank and to satisfy its cravings. Spiritism, in its modern scientific form is, beyond doubt, the most attractive and acceptable substitute for this lost Supernatural that could be presented. It satisfies, or claims to satisfy, longings which all men experience more or less, and which, in a sense, constitute the very basis and conditions of any kind of religious life and belief. One can therefore fully understand how it comes to pass that statements such as those of Sir A. Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge are creating a world-wide attention and why the interest in the subject is such a keen and widespread one.

Now it is not proposed in these articles to raise the question as to the reality and objectivity of the phenomena themselves. They have been under the observation of experts—in many instances men of a pronouncedly skeptical turn of mind—for a long series of years and, for all practical purposes, the final verdict has been given. It is absolutely certain today that, under given conditions, abnormal phenomena occur and that these phenomena are due to some kind of intelligence independent of and apart from the experimenter. The man who doubts this today is simply ignorant of the facts of the case, and unacquainted with the evidence which exists. The basal claims of Spiritism therefore are fully admitted. The Catholic Church has never doubted them and indeed has maintained their reality when modern science was still wrapt in its materialistic slumbers and vehemently denied the existence of a spiritual world and spiritual beings. What we are concerned with is the *interpretation* of these phenomena and the nature, character, and aim of the spirit-beings who are the causes of their production. It is here, the Church contends, where modern science is as utterly astray as it has admittedly been astray in its hitherto interpretations of the observed phenomena of matter. It is setting up hypotheses which the facts of the case do not warrant, and it is erecting a system of religious thought upon contentions which are mere fallacies.

The first of these fallacies is that science has discovered something new and wonderful and of deep importance to human nature. No more ridiculous and wholly groundless claim has ever been made. The practice of necromancy—the invoking and consulting of what were believed to be the spirits of the dead—is as old as the world. Traces of this practice can be found in the history of all races and nations and it may indeed be regarded as the distinguishing characteristic of the pagan civilizations. The Jews no doubt had become familiar with this practice during their captivity and in their contact with the Babylonians and had introduced it amongst their own people. But the Jewish rulers and law-givers, so far from regarding these practices as of any solid value to the religious and social life of the people, had always emphatically condemned them and had enacted severe laws and penalties against them. A witch, whom we would today call a medium, was not allowed to live, and no true son of the people was permitted “to seek the truth from the dead.” This fact is beyond doubt to be ascribed to the circumstance that, as Sir William Barrett, a confirmed spiritist, points out, all these practices “tended to obscure the divine idea, and to weaken the supreme faith in and worship of the One Omnipotent Being, whom the nation was set apart to proclaim. Instead of the arm of the Lord beyond and above them, a motley crowd of pious, lying, vain or gibbering spirits would seem to people the unseen; and weariness, perplexity, and finally despair would enervate and destroy the nation.” Many experienced but disillusioned spiritists of all times and nations have emphatically confirmed the wisdom and reasonableness of this attitude of mind and have supported it by serious and incontrovertible facts.

Our own age furnishes us with an endless variety of striking incidents and experiences which impel the cautious student of the subject to an identical conclusion. All such incidents, unfortunately, are calmly brushed aside by our scientific spiritists, simply because they are seen to run counter to a belief which they are determined to embrace and from which they hope so much for the good of distracted mankind.

But they should at least command the serious attention of all conscientious and right-minded persons and lead them to pause and reflect ere they embark on practices and adopt beliefs, fascinating and plausible no doubt, but fraught nevertheless with perils to both body and soul.

It will be shown in these articles in what these perils mainly consist and what are the fallacies underlying Sir A. Conan Doyle’s contention.

II.

The second fallacy contained in Sir A. Conan Doyle’s argument is his assumption that the spirits of the séance room are the spirits of the dead who have proved their identity. To the student, unacquainted with the intricacies of the subject, the evidence presented in support of this claim will seem strong; but it is nevertheless utterly worthless and proves nothing of the kind. It falls to the ground en-

tirely when it is borne in mind that we have cases on record in which similar striking evidence of identity was given but in which the spirit, caught in a falsehood, finally confessed that he was not what he had claimed to be.

A single instance of this kind shows how complex the problem is and what sources of information must be at the disposal of these spirits—how difficult, if not impossible, it is to prove their identity. All experienced spiritists are fully alive to this immense difficulty and have striven by various devices to overcome it; but so far they have not been successful. The question of identity is still the bitter cross of psychical research, and Sir A. Conan Doyle must be aware of it. It is his “will to believe” which causes him to pass over it so lightly. It is wonderful how this “will to believe” blinds the mind and perverts the judgment. Although it is well known and admitted that the spirits *habitually impersonate the living*, each individual experimenter tries to persuade himself that *his particular spirits* are doing nothing of the kind. It is often only after many months and even years that the deception is discovered and that the disillusionment comes. In one of his works the late Mr. Stainton-Moses, for many years the leader of the English spiritists and a highly educated man, admitted that “all the information ever given him in proof of the presence of the departed might, *in harmony with his experience of the Spirits*, have been first obtained and then imparted by a false intelligence.” Prof. L. P. Jacks of Oxford, President of the British Psychical Research Society in 1917 and personally a high authority on the subject, made this statement in his presidential address: “Take the question of imposture. Mediums are not the only impostors. How about the communicators? Are they masquerading? You can have no absolute proof that there is no imposture on the other side. I think that the whole meaning of personal identity needs to be very carefully thought out and considered before we begin to produce evidence in favor of personal identity.” I had myself a striking experience of this kind of spirit-impersonation many years ago. A spirit, claiming to be a departed personal friend of mine and intimately acquainted with that individual’s life-history, was, after many months, discovered in a falsehood and then freely and boastingly admitted that he had managed to trick us so successfully by drawing the information required from our own sub-conscious memories.

Indeed, the evidence available today fully demonstrates the fact that the main sources of information of these spirits are the sub-conscious minds of the living, although it cannot be claimed that these are their *only* sources of information. They have probably access to knowledge by methods wholly unknown to us and quite beyond our power of imagination. I have dwelt with this aspect of the subject very fully in some of my books. The circumstance that Sir A. Conan Doyle regards the presentation of intimate knowledge respecting some deceased personality as evidence of identity goes to prove how very imperfectly acquainted he is with the subject. The cases he cites in his articles are too briefly stated to admit of a critical examination and judgment; but I am convinced that they all find an adequate ex-

planation in the activities of his own subconscious mind and in the sources of information at the disposal of these astute beings. I am persuaded that no *informed* and *unbiased* student of the subject would today regard any one of them as furnishing proof of identity. What has probably impressed the reader of his articles most of all is the evidence supposed to be furnished by photography. "In two cases," he tells us, "the figures of the deceased lads have appeared beside the mothers in a photograph." But this is, as a matter of fact, the weakest and most worthless evidence of all. Their figures are not the individuals they claim to be but mind-images taken from the memories of the living and exteriorized and clothed with subtle matter by the spirit-intelligences.

This is amply proved by the striking evidence which is available. Some years ago the deceased British Cardinals were very much in evidence in English séance-rooms. The late Cardinal Newman especially was believed to appear regularly at a house well known to me. I was several times present at his materialization and have seen many post mortem photographs of him. But I found that *they all differed very considerably* and that this difference could be traced back to the image of the late Cardinal which the individual observer had in his mind, or to a published photograph of him which he had seen. They could not therefore be presentations of the Cardinal as he exists now in the other life and in his "spirit body." We have furthermore photographs in which the materialized spirit is presented *at various ages*—in one case as a child or youth, in another as a grown up person, the presentation evidently corresponding with the peculiar mind-image which the experimenter had of the deceased. I have in my possession a photograph obtained in a city which I had never visited before and in which there appears by my side a fairly good picture of a deceased member of my family, but alas, for Sir A. Conan Doyle and his theories! there is on the same photograph also the image of a person well known to me *who is still living*, but not as she is now—an elderly lady—but as I knew her years ago, and as I best remember her—a young married woman. Proof positive this, surely! that these images are not photographs of the living dead, but materialized phantasms taken from the subconscious memories of relatives and friends. The masquerading spirits clearly cannot always distinguish the phantasms of the living from those of the dead, and it is here where the critical investigator gets on the track of the deception.

Space does not permit me to carry the argument any further; but sufficient has been said to show that Sir A. Conan Doyle's evidence in favor of the identity of the communicating spirits is utterly worthless, and that his prodigious claim harbors a fundamental and fatal fallacy.

III.

The third fallacy contained in Sir A. Conan Doyle's reasoning is his confident assertion that spirit-intercourse, by means of mediumship, will prove of immense benefit to mankind, especially at a time of exceptional distress such as the present. This note of confidence

pervades all his recent writings. He speaks of "miracles in the form of psychic phenomena happening every day" and of the "tidings of great joy" which they are proving to many. These statements will no doubt lead many a reader to conclude that these phenomena are dropping down from heaven as gifts from God upon a distracted world and at a time of its bitter need. But a greater misconception of the real facts of the case cannot be imagined. *The phenomena spoken of never occur spontaneously, but they are invited and invoked* and, for their occurrence, the initiative has to be taken on the human side—by means of the entranced medium, the passive mind, the circle properly constituted, etc. They have, therefore, nothing whatever in common with the miracles recorded in the Gospels. And there are high *scientific* authorities who are not at all convinced that the beings responding to these invitations are at any time the spirits of the dead.

But I will assume, for argument's sake, that this is really the case—that occasionally at least the spirits of departed human beings manifest by these means. We are then, however, inevitably forced to the conclusion that they must be spirits of the lowest and most debased order—cheats and liars and hypocrites, from contact with whom every right-minded man should abstain. Readers of the preceding chapter will have seen that it is, under the most favorable conditions, impossible to be certain of the identity of the communicators and that, in countless instances, endless misery, disappointment and disillusionment await the enquirer. Experienced spiritists tell us that "even where the most convincing proofs have been given we must be cautious." "I gained the distinct impression," writes Dr. Hereward Carrington, a purely scientific investigator, "that instead of the spirits of the personages who claimed to be present, I was dealing with an exceedingly sly, cunning, tricky and deceitful intelligence which threw out chance remarks, fishing guesses, and shrewd inferences, leaving the sitter to pick them up and elaborate them if he would. If any thing could make me believe in the doctrine of evil and lying spirits it would be the sittings with Mrs. Piper."

But apart from the question as to the real nature of these spirits, around which a fierce controversy will beyond doubt be turning shortly, I maintain that no departed human being who has preserved his moral and intellectual integrity in the other world would adopt means so disastrous to the living as modern mediumship is known to be—purely for the purpose of conveying the most trivial messages to surviving friends. It is here where the real difficulty lies and where deluded scientists are most certainly not telling the whole truth to the public. For what are the actual facts of the case? I will, lest I be suspected of religious bias, let experienced and well-known authorities speak. Respecting the *physical* effects of the practice of mediumship Sir Wm. Crookes writes: "After witnessing the painful state of nervous and bodily prostration in which some of these experiments have left Mr. Home—after seeing him lying in almost fainting condition on the floor, pale and speechless,—I could scarcely doubt that the *evolution of psychic force is accompanied by a corresponding drain on vital force.*" Mr. Stainton-Moses, claimed by the

spiritists all over the world as the highest authority on the subject, wrote of himself as follows: "The hand tingled and the arm throbbed and I was conscious of waves of force surging through me. When the message was done *I was prostrate with exhaustion* and suffered from a violent headache at the base of the brain." Dr. Von Schrenck-Notzing, a scientific experimenter of recent date, tells us that "as a rule it took the medium *two days to recover* from the nervous prostration resulting from these sittings." And Sir Wm. Barrett assures us repeatedly that he has observed "*the steady downward course of all mediums who sit regularly.*" I need not say that my long and many-sided acquaintance with the subject and the reports I am constantly receiving from shipwrecked experimenters confirm the literal truth of these statements.

Respecting the *moral* effects of these spirit-communications the half has never yet been told. I mean to tell the whole of it, however, before I have done with the subject. I will here but quote the statement of one disillusioned spiritist: "The subject, strange to say," he writes, "seemed to have the power of introducing discord in every family in which it entered, of arraying husband against wife in the divorce court, and of producing all manner of domestic infelicity and *sexual irregularities*. This is rather a strange result of the belief that we are surrounded by the spirits of our loved dead, who see all we do!"

But Sir A. Conan Doyle speaks of automatic writing as "perhaps the most satisfactory means of communication." He must know something of the dangers attending it because he tells his readers, in a vague sort of way, that this kind of thing "can be overdone." The well-established fact, of course, is that this apparently harmless form of communication is the most dangerous one of all. For while this writing, in its various forms, can be readily induced and progressively developed, *it cannot be so easily shut off*. In most instances the experimenter ultimately becomes the victim of the power which he has called into operation, that power, by the incessant and maddening prompting itself disclosing itself as anything but a kindly relative or friend.

I have never ceased to draw attention in my writings to this peril and I have invariably illustrated my assertions by accounts of actual and most painful occurrences. I will here let an authority speak who has never committed himself to any religious belief and who writes purely as a scientific man. "I know this progressive development well," writes Dr. Carrington. "I have so many different accounts sent me from different sources that I know each step of the process perfectly. First slow scrawls and scratches obtained with difficulty and only after long waiting; then the formation of definite letters; then the more rapid flow of the hand-writing with intelligent connexion; then personal remarks, answers, conversations, lies, impertinence: then the stage in which it seems hardly necessary for the subject to touch the board at all; then the board is discarded altogether and a pencil is substituted in its place. The writing now becomes still more personal, the subject. . . . begins to be domi-

nated by it. Then, if the subject still continues, rapid—furiously rapid writing takes place; the desire to write is constantly present; pain develops at the base of the brain; then the pencil is discarded and writing is performed with any object which is handy—a fork, a paper knife, etc., or with the fingers in the air; finally the subject seems to “intuit” the words before they are written out; this becomes more and more intense until distinct auditory hallucinations result; the patient listens to the internal voices and follows and believes what they say: she loses sleep; insomnia sets in; a strange light is seen in her eyes; all sense of proportion is lost, the subject is completely wrapped up in the internal voices and pays but little attention to external affairs; she is completely dominated or obsessed by the internal reverie; to all intents and purposes she has become insane.” . . . “I doubt not that many hundreds of persons become insane every year by reason of these experiments with the planchette board . . .”

In view of such a statement as this based upon wide experience and dictated by no religious pre-possession, one can but ask this question: Will any sane person maintain that spirit-intercourse by means of automatic writing or of any other form of mediumship can ever under any circumstances be conceived to prove a blessing to mankind?

IV.

A fourth and still more fatal fallacy contained in Sir A. Conan Doyle's argument is his absurd contention that the information which is now being obtained from the spirit-world will necessitate the reconstruction of the Christian Religion.

He is, of course, not the first reconstructionist of whom we have heard. Some years ago Mr. R. J. Campbell of the “New Theology” movement attempted a similar thing; but we know today how hopelessly that movement has come to grief. Like all these text-mongers he presented to the world interpretations of Holy Writ which the context could not possibly bear and which any child in the Sunday school could have refuted. Sir A. Conan Doyle's interpretations are of this order. Let me take a single instance. He quotes the text from the Apocalypse: “I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Write:” and he interprets this as a command or injunction to employ automatic writing. But the context in the first place indicates that it is not some discarnate human intelligence that gives the injunction, but the Holy Spirit, and secondly, that the writer is not to wait for what may come through his pen, but is told *what* to write. And what he is to write is: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” It is in fact the enunciation of a divine truth or law put in poetical language, and any unbiased reader would see this when the whole text is quoted. It must be clear that if the “New Revelation” is to be built up on this kind of juggling with texts it is not likely to prove a very great success.

But it is evident that Sir A. Conan Doyle's reconstruction of Christianity is really a *destruction* of it, since all that is vital in and characteristic of it is eliminated in the process. I will here but take

a single dogma of Historical Christianity which all reasonable men will admit to be fundamental. Sir A. Conan Doyle tells us that we must "concentrate more upon Christ's life and much less upon his death, etc." In his book he develops this thought more fully and tells us that since there never was a fall there could be no need of Atonement and Redemption and that "one can see no justice in vicarious sacrifice, nor in the God who could be placated by such means." Now what is this but "a making void of the cross of Christ" as St. Paul puts it, and a relapsing into paganism? For if any fact is clear from history, it is the fact that the doctrine of the atoning and redeeming death of the Son of God is a fundamental primitive truth of Christianity. For its profession, thousands and tens of thousands of the best and noblest of men and women of all races and nations have died, from it the Saints and Martyrs of all ages have drawn their highest inspiration and upon it our entire Christian civilization has been built up.

It is just this doctrine, pervading the whole of the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church from the earliest times which is the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian Religion. "The Son of Man," declared our Lord, "is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many." "This is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins."

The inference, therefore, clearly is that, if Sir A. Conan Doyle is right and his spirits are to be believed, the Saints and Martyrs have believed a lie and have died in vain. And God looked on and allowed this thing to be done, knowing all the while that some centuries later the disillusionment would come! Is not this mode of reasoning utterly self-destructive? For who will hereafter believe in and love and honor a God who assented to such a deception, who allowed a new civilization, involving the shedding of oceans of blood and of tears, to be built upon a falsehood—upon a misconception which could so easily have been avoided or been put right?

And how comes it to pass, we might further ask, that while any soldier boy, translated to the spirit-world, discovers this fact and finds ways and means of communicating it, the saints and great religious teachers of mankind have never found it possible to do this—are allowing their disciples and followers to continue propagating what they now know to be a falsehood?

Is it necessary to carry the argument any further? Does it not refute itself—hopelessly and utterly? Does not that other striking text of Holy Scripture which Sir A. Conan Doyle so flagrantly distorts in his book disclose to us the real source of his "New Revelation"?

He admits there that we have to deal sometimes "with absolutely cold-blooded lying on the part of wicked or mischievous intelligences." We must not, therefore, he says, believe every spirit, but "try the spirits" whether they be of God. But the text goes on to say: (1. St. John. IV, 1. Prot. Version) "*because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every

spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world." I doubt very much whether Sir A. Conan Doyle would have quoted this text had he taken the trouble to look it up in the New Testament.

How appropriate, in view of such despicable perversions of truth, is the solemn warning of the Apostle St. Paul: (I. S. Tim. VI, 20, Prot. Version.) "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith."

V.

It will have been seen from the brief preceding statements that the structure upon which Sir A. Conan Doyle and his co-workers are seeking to build up their "New Revelation" is a very flimsy one and that it cannot possibly withstand the assaults of full and accurate information and of ordinary common sense. Their mode of procedure is not an unfamiliar one. *True* science gathers together *all* the facts respecting any particular problem that are available and then constructs its interpretations and theories accordingly. *Pseudo* science starts with a theory and fits the facts into it as best it can, entirely discarding and ignoring those which run counter to it.

Sir A. Conan Doyle's method is of this latter order, and we may rightly say that just as Christian Science is neither Christian nor Science, so the "New Revelation" is neither new nor revelation. It is an ancient error, revived and presented in attractive modern form, and it has its origin in the vivid imagination of some semi-panteistic and very imperfectly informed enthusiasts. Its danger to true Christianity does not lie in its force and reasonableness, but in the state of the public mind, which, as we all know, is but too receptive just now of a fascinating form of thought of this kind. We can scarcely be surprised that an age which could swallow the Christian Science nonsense should become enthusiastic over the "New Revelation." Strange to say both forms of thought, while widely diverging in other respects, are of one mind respecting that fundamental truth of Christianity upon which everything turns. Both deny the atoning and redemptive power of suffering, as it finds its highest and fullest expression in the doctrine of the Cross of Christ. Both coolly ignore the forceful and persistent testimony to its truth of millions of the best and noblest of mankind. Both present to the world interpretations of Scripture, which are manifest perversions of it. And as the founder of Christian Science too dabbled in Spiritism, and its tenets bear a remarkable resemblance to the effusions obtained by automatic writing, it is more than probable that both systems of thought emanate from the same source.

We may be confident, therefore, that when Christian Science and the "New Revelation" shall have had their day and men shall

have grown weary of them, the root error which they embody will re-appear, dressed up in some other attractive form.

The limits of space imposed upon me here have necessitated a very inadequate treatment of the subject. I have, however, dealt with it very fully and from many different points of view in a new book which I have entitled: *THE NEW BLACK MAGIC*. There are but two other points on which I can briefly comment here.

Sir A. Conan Doyle asserts that "religion, as it is now taught in the Churches, has failed. . . . because it is not believed." And in his book he goes on to say that "Christianity . . . has deferred the changes (the reconstruction) very long until her churches are half empty, women her chief supporters," etc., etc.

But it would surely be more correct to say that a certain *kind* or brand of Christianity has failed. And it is that kind, as all the world knows, which preaches the Christ of the "New Revelation" and of similar modern thought-movements. And the Churches which are *more than half* empty are those which have become mere entertainment bureaus and cheap variety shows. Who would dare to assert this of the buildings of the Catholic Church, in which the true Historic Christ, the divine Saviour of the world, is preached and in which His valid Sacraments are administered? And who does not know that the experiences of the war have led and are daily leading untold numbers of serious-minded persons, disgusted with these various worthless form of sham Christianity, to seek admission to her fold?

'No more palpable and obvious falsehood in support of a newly-coined religion has probably ever been uttered! The one seemingly valid objection which might be urged against the attitude of the Catholic Church in this matter is that it is a fanatical and uncharitable one, and that it robs the heart of a consolation of which it stands in such sore need at this time of distress. But *experience* teaches, as I have shown, that *no true and permanent consolation can possibly come from this quarter*, but that, on the contrary, disappointment, mental distress and disquietude, and ultimate disillusionment await the enquirer. And the Church, which has been longer on the scenes than any one of these innovators, is anxious to guard her children against the loss of faith and against this painful, but inevitable disillusionment. She cannot put her seal to a flagrant error and to a manifest distortion of truth.

But it is a mistake to suppose that she stands alone in her condemnation of Spiritism. There are many high scientific and literary authorities who, though not Catholic, warmly approve of her attitude—who doubt very much whether the spirits of the séance-room are at any time the spirits of the dead.

Mr. Dale Owen, himself an ardent spiritist, was constrained to write years ago: "There are more reasons than many imagine for the opinion entertained by some able men, Protestants as well as Catholics, that the communications in question come from the powers of darkness and that we are entering on the first steps of a career of

demoniac manifestation, the issues whereof men cannot conjecture.”

A more recent experimenter, Dr. Van Eeden, a Dutch physician, intimately acquainted with the subject, wrote the following: “In this region lie risks of error . . . not merely scientific and intellectual, but also of moral error . . . And it is this which seems, indeed, to justify the orthodox religions in condemning the evocation of spirits as immoral, as infringing upon secrets hidden from man by the Eternal.”

But I have already exceeded the limits of space allotted to me and so much remains to be said. I can but advise those who have time and opportunity to study the larger works on this subject.



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